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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2009, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN— PROGRESS FOR THE AVERAGE AMERICAN

The SPEAKER. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, tonight, the President will address an expectant country in a joint session of Congress, and will give the American people a report on the progress that he has made and intends to make in the near future. The key word here is "progress."

In barely a month, President Obama has shown us that he can walk the talk. The stimulus package the President signed into law will take America down a road that we did not see in the last administration. It is one that governs from the center, focused on the average American—the average person who gets up in the morning, gets to work at 8 o'clock, works until 5 o'clock and goes home and takes care of his family, maybe coaches baseball, maybe is a single mother who goes home, picks her kids up at daycare and goes home and takes care of them for the evening, but it is focused on the average American.

Now, in the last 8 years, these people have either been left behind or have been thrown overboard by the last administration in its rush to open America's purse, wallet, whatever you want—bank vaults—to their friends. The economic disaster that President Obama is facing and will talk about to

the American people today and tonight was really there, waiting on the desk when he got to the Oval Office. He didn't bring it with him. He didn't have very much to do with creating it. He was only in the Senate a short time. It was presented to him by the last administration, and he has now, in just 1 month, given us a recovery plan that helps the American people. Above all, I believe the President strikes a very delicate balance and walks a very fine, thin tightrope between economic recovery and economic disaster.

How do you deal with it as it's going downhill? How do you arrest it? It's like being in the mountains. In western Washington, we have mountains. People are up, climbing mountains, and one of the first things you have to learn to do when climbing mountains where there is snow is learn how to do an arrest. You're sliding down a glacier. What do you do to stop yourself from falling? The first thing you've got to learn to do is put that ice ax in and hold. Now, the President is working on that sort of problem. We are sliding down—and have been since September—very abruptly, and he has got to bring this slide to a halt and then start the climb and get us back up on our feet and start back on the climb.

There are those who say we ought to throw the banking institutions overboard because of their unrestrained practices. Maybe we're going to have to nationalize banks. One doesn't know exactly what is going to be necessary, but the President has begun to show that he is willing to make the tough decisions that have to be done. There are some who say the average American does not benefit. I've had calls. I've had people come up to me and say, "I pay my bills. I do everything right. I didn't go out and borrow a lot of money, and it looks to me like the only people who are getting any benefit out of this are people who made wild, crazy decisions, like bankers. Why am I not getting something?"

But people do count in this administration—finally. The UI benefits will help those who have lost their jobs. There is a payroll deduction that goes into the average person's pocket, and there is going to be, finally, some oversight in governing on behalf of the American people, overall, returning America to the American people.

It took 96 months to destroy our economy. Remember where Mr. Bush came in. There was a burgeoning surplus. We argued in 2000 about whether we would pay down the national debt too fast. That's where we were. He had a plan. He didn't tell us what his plan was, but it was not only to not pay down the debt but to build it up dramatically in the period that followed. This President who has now come into office has said we're going to stop that, and we're going to change what's going on.

A New York Times editorial today reminds us that the other side of this body remains intent on working against American workers. The Governor of Mississippi and the Governor of Louisiana say, "We don't want that unemployment money for our part-time workers." There is clearly some rethinking that has got to be done on behalf of this body in terms of what is going on in this country. Part-time workers are entitled to the unemployment insurance they paid in.

The American people want a solution, and if the Republicans choose to ignore that, the American people have made it clear already that they can return to the voting booth and enforce their will.

[From the New York Times, Feb. 24, 2009]
WHAT PART OF 'STIMULUS' DON'T THEY GET?

Imagine yourself jobless and struggling to feed your family while the governor of your state threatens to reject tens of millions of dollars in federal aid earmarked for the unemployed. That is precisely what is happening in poverty-ridden states like Louisiana and Mississippi where Republican governors are threatening to turn away federal

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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